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District of Arizona*

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MEXICAN CITIZEN SENTENCED TO OVER 19 YEARS IN PRISON ON DRUG SMUGGLING CHARGES

TUCSON, Ariz. - Jorge Jesus Serrano-Villa, of Mexico, was sentenced here on Monday to 235 months in prison by U.S. District Judge Raner C. Collins. Serrano-Villa pleaded guilty to a four-count indictment on April 21, 2005 without any plea agreement with the government.

Serrano-Villa was indicted in October 2004 for importation of methamphetamine, importation of cocaine, possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine and possession with intent to distribute cocaine. DEA laboratory analysis concluded that Serrano-Villa, smuggled 14.77 kilograms of methamphetamine which was 98% pure, 5.8 kilograms of cocaine which was 87% pure, and 1.38 kilograms of heroin which was 58% pure.

U.S. Attorney Paul K. Charlton said of the methamphetamine issue, "Targeting those who produce and smuggle illegal drugs, especially methamphetamine, is one of the top priorities for the Department of Justice nationwide. In partnering with the Department of Homeland Security, we continue to exhaust every available resource to loosen the stranglehold of this drug in our communities throughout Arizona."

Serrano-Villa was arrested on drug smuggling charges on September 19, 2004 at the DeConcini Port of Entry in Nogales, Ariz. when he attempted to enter the U.S. from Mexico. Customs and Border Protection officers inspected the vehicle that Serrano-Villa was driving and located a trap door in the front passenger wheel well area. The trap door provided access into a non-factory compartment concealing 42 packages which tested positive for both methamphetamine and cocaine. Serrano-Villa admitted that he knew the drugs were in the vehicle and that he had been offered \$5000 to register the vehicle in his name and to drive it to Tucson, Ariz.

The investigation was conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Nogales, Ariz. The prosecution was handled by Joelyn D. Marlowe, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Tucson, Ariz.

CASE NUMBER: CR-04-2092-RCC
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